

67.FSC or Business as usual?

Social impacts of forest certification in Cameroon

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FSC or Business as usual? Social impacts of forest certification in Cameroon The paradigm of Sustainable Forest Management is central in the forestry laws enacted over the latest decades in the Congo Basin countries. However its implementation, and hence effectiveness are questioned because of weak control and law enforcement by the forestry services. Under pressure from western markets, international NGOs and cooperation agencies, several logging companies have opted for privately certified forest management with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard. The FSC scheme has a strong social component aiming at the optimal integration of local populations in the forest management process. The article examines the effectiveness of local organizations put in place around 9 FSC certified concessions from 3 logging companies in Cameroon and assesses the “renewed” relationships with local communities. Overall, results show that social issues are better integrated in the management practices of certified companies as compared to non-certified one. The main success of forest certification is to transform violent conflict to latent tensions and move towards negotiated solutions instead of repression. However, remain very much the FSC promoted local organizations are financially and technically dependent on logging companies and face a lack of grassroots legitimacy. Even when FSC certified, logging companies tend to assess their initiatives towards communities more in terms of their existence than in terms of their actual effectiveness, which is still a step further from the actual adoption of concerned social forestry.

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